

Nasrin Sotoudeh's letter to her daughter Mehraveh: You have been patient like me.

Change for Equality - concurrent with the announcement that Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh is the recipient of the prestigious American PEN Award for her defense of freedom of expression, we received Nasrin Sotoudeh's letter to her daughter Mehraveh.

Translated by Iran Rooyan

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Mehraveh, the love of my heart, my pride and joy

I am writing you from unit 209 of Evin and extend to you my greetings and heartfelt blessings. I remove my worries, concerns, and tears from my basket so that it has room to overflow with my love, greetings and well wishes for you and your beloved brother.

It has been six months since I have been separated from my beloved children. During this time I have had only a few opportunities to visit with you and only in the presence of the security forces. During this time I have not been given permission to either write or receive any correspondence or pictures. During this time I have not been given permission to visit with you outside the presence of the security forces. You may not have been aware of the heavy pain and burden that rest on my heart every time that I visited you under these strict and secure conditions.

On every occasion after our visits, and every single moment of my days here, I have asked myself this one question, "have I respected and honored my children's rights?" Often I have longed to know with a certainty, that you, my daughter, in whose wisdom and judgment I have absolute faith, do not consider me a violator of my children's rights.

You know my dear Mehraveh, from the very first day of my arrest I have been thinking of you and your brother's rights as children. In particular I worried more about you because of your age. I worried about your patience, I worried about your judgment, I worried about your spirit, and more than anything else I worried about how your friends and classmates would



Photo by: Raha Asgarizadeh

TRANSLATION: Mehraveh

react and accept this predicament. However, it was not long before my fears and concerns faded and I realized that none of these concerns mattered. I realized that I, no, that we, have been able to stand firm and strong in our place.

You have been patient like me. In response to my own question I said: “my daughter, do not for one moment think that I have done something to deserve this judgment and punishment and that in this path I was not thinking of you or your wellbeing.” Then with confidence and a resolute heart I said to you: “Every one of my actions was done in accordance with the law.” With your small hands you caressed my face and assured me: “I know Mom, I know.” It was on that day that I woke up from the nightmare of my children’s judgment.”

My daughter! My concerns and worries about you and your friendships with your classmates were completely unfounded. For, as it has always been, the new generation reaches wisdom and maturity faster than their parents. With this knowledge I ceased to worry about these issues and returned to stand firm on my convictions. It is this conviction, resolve and strength I owe to you.

Mehraveh the beloved of my heart! Now let me tell you of some of my pleasant memories. Many times at night, in prison, when it is time for us to go to sleep, I try to recall how I used to put you to sleep. Among all the lullabies and poems that I would recite for you as you would fall asleep, “Paria” was your favorite. At nights you always asked for “Paria” (Angels).

Once upon a time there were three beautiful Angels

My daughter!

One of my most important motivations in advancing children’s rights was you. I always thought and I still think that the fruits of all of my efforts and struggles for children’s rights benefited my own children more than anyone else. Every time I returned home from court where I had defended the rights of those precious children who had suffered tremendously, I would hold you and your sweet brother longer and closer in my arms. I still do not know the reason for that. Maybe I wanted to make up for the suffering of all those children. I remember once you told me that you do not want to turn 18. I asked you why, you said that being a child has so many bounties and blessings that you were not willing to part with. You do not know how happy I was to hear your response. I remember how you so often reminded us that you were not yet 18 years old and that we must be mindful of your rights as a child.

In the same manner that I cannot ignore your rights, and in the same manner that I have attempted to protect you and your rights, I have not been able to ignore or dismiss the rights of my clients.

How could I have abandoned my clients when they needed me most? How could I have left them when they needed me to represent them and to present their case? I could never do that, never.

At the end I want to tell you in order to protect and secure the rights of many, namely the rights of my children and your future, I accepted and took on many cases and clients. I

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believe that the hardships and difficulties that our family and many of my clients have endured over the years will not be in vain. Justice will arrive exactly at the darkest hour, when it is needed most, when all hope has been abandoned. Undoubtedly it will arrive. I wish you a world of happiness and joy, filled with a child's memories. If you are upset with those who have put me here or who will pass judgment on me, in your childhood manner ask for their peace and serenity so that maybe we may achieve peace and tranquility in our lives.

I miss you

I kiss you a hundred times

Mamman Nasrin